

## **THE BODY IS NOT YOU, BUT YOU ARE ITS KING!**

### **THE PARABLE OF LIFE AND KARMA AS STATECRAFT**

Most people consider the body they were born with to be themselves. However, the Buddha wisely teaches us that this is not the case. The body is simply a temporary host that forms in order to allow a maturing batch of pending and currently manifesting karmic seeds to play out. Once the karma has taken its course, the lifespan ends. Thus, there are usually many ghosts and spirits, who are either karmic debtors or creditors, surrounding each person. Moreover, there are innumerable microbes living within our bodies as well.

Thus, our bodies are not owned by us, and neither defines our identity nor represents our true inner self. It is instead a non-renewable term of office with us as the officeholder and the surrounding spirits, ghosts etc. as the subjects. What matters is not to stay in office forever, but to accumulate enough merits and to act in accordance with the law (i.e. the Buddha's sutras) during the term of office so that new and better appointments follow (i.e. increased blessings in this life and a good rebirth). Human rebirth is precious because it is extremely easy to accumulate eon spanning bliss and merits from the good deeds we do in this life, even if those deeds and our present ability seem trivial. For instance, simply studying, reciting and sharing the Infinite Life Sutra will yield limitless billions of eons worth of wealful rebirths. Thus, to be human today is truly as powerful as holding high office.

Therefore, we must not be a fatuous lord. Any evil influence or misleading arguments that find their way to our ears must be treated like foolish or evil advisors and ministers. Such selfish and treacherous influences exist in every court and is kept at bay by the discernment of the ruler.

Moreover, a wise lord accumulates resources and fortifies his domain. He is frugal and neither gambles nor lavishes on luxury. Likewise we should do good deeds and build up our stocks of merit. The sutras state that our own virtue can benefit the whole community! Moreover, it can convert karmic creditors into protectors, repel evil ghosts and people, and multiply the ranks of the protector spirits in our entourage. In the Taoist Treatise of Response and Retribution, it is said that those who merely harbor good thoughts will be shadowed by many auspicious gods.

Further, the lord who is aggressive or desires much will lose to attrition and be exhausted. Likewise, if we waste our resources on ambitious actions or power plays, we would use up our past life stock of good karma very quickly. Though there might be glory attained, it will be fleeting and followed by woe. It is just like the old maxim: The mantis stalks the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind. If we squander our merits, we leave ourselves defenseless against and outflanked by the spirits of karmic creditors that shadow us.

Lastly, we must remember that no lord who has been reckless has ruled for long. Thus, we must not accumulate sins and vices, for they lead to woe and sully the dignity of the office we all hold!